The spring semester meeting of the Commencement Committee was held on Friday, April 19th at 10:00 a.m. Those attending were: President Patton, Gayle Christian, Gayla Domke, Erin Erskine, Chip Gallagher, Kurt Keppler, Marian Meyers, Ed Miles, Tom Netzel, Marcia Pearl, Larry Rifkind, Sue Seago, and Marti Singer. The first item of business was discussion of commencement speakers. Dr. Patton said that the speakers for May 11th were Regent John Hunt for the 10:00 a.m. ceremony and Chancellor Tom Meredith for the ceremony at 3:00 p.m. Also at the May commencement an honorary degree will be awarded to Ben Johnson, Jr., founding dean of the College of Law. In August we will award an honorary degree to Bill Dahlberg. Dr. Patton has spoken to Mayor Franklin about being a speaker, and this will be possible when her schedule allows. Another possible speaker is Regent Hilton Howell. Suggestions made included Arthur Blank and Bernie Marcus. Dr. Patton asked the committee to send suggestions to him by e-mail. He added that this year we are concentrating on health sciences and hoping for some speakers in that field.

Discussion of the ceremony concerned the size of the graduating class and associated number of guests. Eventually, the change may be made to one large ceremony but currently there is no appropriate space for such. Renting the Georgia Dome costs approximately $50,000. Another disadvantage is that graduates families and guests would not come to campus. The change to two ceremonies per quarter and then semester was made as the number of graduates increased. Now the days vary, with one per year on Saturday, one on Sunday and one on Monday. This helps to accommodate any differing religious concerns. The possibility of one large ceremony, followed by breakout ceremonies for each College, was discussed. It was determined to be difficult to find six appropriate locations on campus for these to be held. There are future plans for a convocation center, which would seat about 9,000 people. When this is available, it might be possible to have one large ceremony. In our present location (Athletic Arena) there are 825 seats on the floor for the graduates, with seats for 3,300 guests. For this May graduation there are approximately 1,200 graduating. The students know of the ticket system and understand. This time they will be necessary, and probably by May 2003. This would mean one ceremony for Arts and Sciences, one for the Robinson College of Business, and one for the four other colleges combined. Volunteers to work these three ceremonies may be difficult to find. One reason for the increased numbers is that there are more traditional students, coming here directly form high school and finishing their undergraduate degree in four years. It may be five or six years before the August and December ceremonies are too large for the present format.

Concerning the change in process for regalia for graduates, Charles Gilbreath said that the long-time contract formerly in place had been mishandled by the vendor, so a change was necessary. Most schools now have students purchase the gowns instead of renting. The cost is about $25 to purchase. One problem in the past was that some rental gowns were never returned. In those cases the Graduation Office had to absorb the expenses, along with other expenses once covered by other areas. For the December ceremony, when the new regalia plan is implemented, the Georgia State colors of blue and red will be on the hoods. There will be one posthumous degree given in May for a student who was in the College of Health and Human Sciences. This will be presented to the family in the VIP Room prior to the ceremony. The call for honorary degrees will go out in the fall. Georgia State is allowed to award two per year. A candidate to be considered should be of some stature and have good connections with Georgia State University.

Submitted by,
Frances B. Stone